

**Request for Applications
Louisiana Specialty Crops Competitiveness Program
2010 Cooperative Agreements**

State Agency

Louisiana Specialty Crops Competitiveness Program
Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF)

State Agency Contact

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Deadline for Receiving Completed Application

Applications must be received by the State Agency Contact by close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Friday, May 7, 2010.

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
<u>Sub-grantee</u>	<u>A firm, organization or institution who is awarded a contract through LDAF</u>
<u>Application</u>	<u>A response to an RFA</u>
<u>Applicant</u>	<u>A firm or individual who responds to an RFA</u>
<u>RFA</u>	<u>A request for applications</u>
<u>Shall, Must, or Will</u>	<u>Denotes mandatory language; a requirement that must be met without alteration</u>
<u>Should, Can, or May</u>	<u>Denotes desirable, non-mandatory language</u>

General

On December 21, 2004, the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) authorized the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to state Departments of Agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 under section 10109 and authorized the USDA to provide grants to States for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Each state that submits an application that is reviewed and approved by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is to receive a base grant of 1/3 of one percent of the total amount of funding made available for that fiscal year to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. In addition, AMS will allocate the remainder of the grant funds based on the value of specialty crop production in each state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production using the latest available cash receipt data.

On Wednesday, February 3, 2010, AMS published a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) in the Federal Register (page 5561, Vol. 75, No. 22) inviting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant – Farm Bill (SCBG-FB). Although the AMS has not officially released funds to the states, LDAF anticipates \$351,899.77 will be available for the State of Louisiana.

LDAF will develop a state plan requesting these funds to implement projects that meet program guidelines to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. This request for applications has been developed to provide information and encourage interested parties to apply for funding. LDAF will consider all applications received by close of business (4:30 p.m.), Friday, May 7, 2010 for inclusion in LDAF's state plan grant application.

Eligibility Qualifications to be Considered

1. To be eligible for funding consideration the project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of Louisiana grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. See the SCBGP-FB website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/scbgpdefinitions>, for a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.
2. AMS encourages states to develop projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the issues affecting the specialty crop industry.
3. Grant funds will be awarded for projects lasting up to three years. The grant period will begin around November 1, 2010.
4. Applications should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.
5. Multi-state projects are encouraged to provide a growing need for solutions to problems that cross state boundaries such as, but not limited to: addressing good agricultural practices, research on crop productivity or quality, enhancing access

to federal nutrition programs, pest and disease management, or commodity-specific projects addressing common issues in multi-state regions.

Work to be Performed and Scope of Services Required

Applications to be considered must meet one or more of the following and that support a program solely directed toward increasing the competitiveness of Louisiana produced specialty crops.

1. Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
2. Increasing the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American and disadvantaged farmers;
3. Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
4. Assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
5. Specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
6. Enhancing food safety;
7. Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
8. Pest and disease control;
9. Specialty crop production sustainability; and/or
10. Marketing and product promotion activities.

Information Requested in Application

(NOTE: ONE SIGNED ORIGINAL APPLICATION SHALL BE REQUIRED; FOUR ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS ARE REQUESTED.

In addition to a completed and signed SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B, the application should include the project narrative which may not exceed six pages with an acceptable font pitch of 11. Narratives should include:

1. Project Title and Abstract – The following information should be included in this section:
 - A. Project Title: The title should adequately describe the project.
 - B. Abstract: Include a project abstract of 200 words or less. The project abstract must contain a summary of the proposed project suitable for

dissemination to the public. It should be a self-contained description of the project and should contain a statement of objectives and methods to be employed.

2. Project Purpose – The following questions should be addressed in this section:
 - A. Describe the specific issue, problem interest or need to be addressed by the project?
 - B. Why is the project important and timely?
 - C. What are the objectives of the project?
 - D. If the project builds on a previously approved project, how does this project compliment work done previously? Provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences per project) of the results of the completed work on this project, the long-term quantifiable effects of these results (especially as they impact on the specialty crop industry), and how this year's funding will supplement or build on previous funding from the SCBGP or SCBGP-FB.
 - E. Has the project been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program?
3. Potential Impact - This section should show how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. The following questions should be answered:
 - A. Who are the beneficiaries of the project?
 - B. How many beneficiaries will be impacted?
 - C. How will the beneficiaries be impacted by the project?
 - D. Describe the potential economic impact of the project if available?
4. Expected Measurable Outcomes – The following questions should be answered in this section:
 - A. Describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries.
 - B. The measurable outcome should provide a time frame when outcome measures will be achieved and when possible, should include the following:
 - a. GOAL
 - b. PERFORMANCE MEASURE
 - c. BENCHMARK
 - d. TARGET
 - C. How will performance toward meeting the outcome(s) be monitored?

Define who your data sources are and how will data be collected?

If using a survey, provide information on the nature of the questions that will be asked, the methodology to be used, and the population to be surveyed.

- D. How will data gathered be used to correct deficiencies and improve performance?
5. Work Plan – The following information should be included in this section:
- A. Identify the activities necessary to accomplish the project objectives. Make sure to include your performance monitoring/data collection plan activity described in the expected measurable outcome section in the work plan.
 - B. Indicate who will do the work of each activity. If collaborative arrangements or subcontracts are used, make sure you specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.
 - C. Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the project is scheduled to begin.
6. Budget Narrative – A narrative that explains and clarifies those budget items as requested on the SF424a. Indirect costs will not be allowed. All requested budget items/ activities should correlate to the purpose/goals of the project and demonstrate that they are reasonable and adequate for the proposed work. Although there is no format for the budget narrative, it should contain the following applicable information.
- A. **Personnel.** For each project participant, indicate their title, the percent of full time equivalents (FTE), and the corresponding salary for the FTE.
 - B. **Fringe Benefits.** Indicate the rate of fringe benefits for each salary.
 - C. **Travel.** Indicate the destination, purpose of trip, number of people traveling, number of days traveling, total airfare costs if applicable, total ground transportation costs if applicable, total lodging and meals costs if applicable, and total mileage costs for the travel if applicable.
 - D. **Equipment.** Indicate anticipated purchases or rental costs of equipment and its intended use. List separately each item of equipment, its intended use, and its cost. Equipment is an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000. If under \$5,000, please include under supplies.
 - Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct and indirect charges.
 - Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5000 or more have the prior approval of AMS. The special purpose equipment must solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry. (Note: Prior approval from AMS

means that the special purpose equipment must be included in the LDAF State Plan, and the LDAF State Plan must receive approval from AMS. If special purpose equipment was not originally included in the approved LDAF State plan, then the grantee must request approval from LDAF/AMS to purchase the equipment before utilizing grant funds.)

- Rental costs of buildings and equipment are allowable as direct costs in accordance with the cost principles in Subpart T of 7 CFR 3015.
- E. **Supplies.** Provide an itemized list of projected supply expenditures and the dollar amount for each item.
- F. **Contractual.** Provide a short description of the services each contract covers and the flat rate fee or the total hourly rate. Compensation for individual consultant services should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. Consultant may not exceed \$130,000 per year or \$500 per eight-hour day, excluding travel and subsistence costs.
- G. **Other.** Provide detailed descriptions of other costs such as conferences or meetings, communications, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, and data collection, and other budgeted costs associated with each project.
- H. **Indirect Costs.** Indicate the percentage of indirect costs. Indirect costs should not exceed 10 percent of any proposed budget. Provide a justification if indirect costs are higher than 10 percent. A cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it is incurred for the same purpose under SCBGP-FB as a direct cost and vice versa.
- I. **Program Income.** If program income will be earned on any project, indicate the nature and source of program income, the estimated amount, and how the income will be used to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. For example if registration fees are being collected at a conference as part of the project, indicate the estimated amount of registration fees that will be collected and describe how the registration fees will be used to solely enhance the competitive of specialty crops.
7. **Project Oversight** – The following questions and information should be addressed in this section:
- A. Who will oversee the project activities?
 - B. How will oversight be performed? Include timelines.
8. **Project Commitment** – Provide the following information in this section:
- A. Who supports this project?
 - B. How will a partner(s) work toward the goals and outcomes of the project?

9. Multi-state Projects – Describe how the States are going to collaborate effectively. Indicate the State taking the coordinating role. Indicate the percent of the budget covered by each State.

Selection Procedure

1. All applications received by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) no later than Friday, May 7, 2010 will be reviewed by internal screening to determine if the applicant is eligible and if the project is eligible. Eligible applications will then be evaluated by a selection committee.
2. The following criteria will be used by the selection committee:
 - A. Significance to the industry
 - B. Project personnel
 - C. Approach to project aims
 - D. Reasonableness of budget
 - E. Overall plan feasibility

Each of the five (5) categories will be rated on a point system. Applications receiving averaged selection committee scores at or above 90 percent will be invited as a finalist to present before the committee. Applicants selected to present their applications to the selection committee will be based on the weights as specified in #7 below. All items of required information must be answered for the application to be considered by the selection committee.

3. A representative of LDAF may inspect the physical facilities of the finalists prior to the presentations before the selection committee.
4. The applicants that qualify for the final round of the selection process will be notified of their selection at least one (1) week in advance of the date they are to make their presentations to the selection committee. The selection committee will meet no later than May 25, 2010.
5. The presentations will be made in the Hammond Complex Conference Room, Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry building, 47076 N. Morrison Boulevard, Hammond, Louisiana.
6. Each finalist will have 30 minutes to make their presentation, inclusive of set up and removal of equipment and materials.
7. In the final selection procedure, each of the five (5) categories listed below will be rated on a point system and weighted according to the following aspects of their application:
 - A. Significance (1-25 points) – based upon the extent to which the project, if successfully completed, will make an important and/or original contribution to the enhancement of the competitiveness of Louisiana produced specialty crops.

- B. Personnel (1-15 points) – based upon experience and capability of key personnel assigned to the project to demonstrate ability to accomplish the program objective.
- C. Approach (1-15 points) – based upon extent to which the concept, design, methods, analyses and technologies is properly developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the project aims.
- D. Reasonableness of Budget (1- 20 points) – based upon cost for services rendered and total proposed cost of the program. To be evaluated based on the need of budgeted items to complete the project and the reasonable cost of such.
- E. Overall Plan Feasibility (1-25 points) – based upon the likelihood that the proposed work can be accomplished within the proposed budget by the applicant, given staff experience and expertise, past progress, available resources, institutional/organizational commitment, and access to technologies.

Scores from the initial selection committee review process will be discarded and the finalists receiving the highest averaged selection committee scores will be recommended to LDAF for funding.

More than one award may be granted. LDAF reserves the right to fund proposals partially or fully.

Award Information

LDAF will select projects to be developed into one LDAF grant submission to AMS. LDAF is under no legal or other obligation to award a grant on the basis of a response to this RFA and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications submitted.

Announcement of the selected application(s) will be made in writing to all applicants within one week after final presentations are made.

Selected projects may be asked to provide more detailed information on their project's work plan and measurables.

Selected projects will begin after AMS has made their official award to LDAF and contracts have been entered into by and between LDAF and the sub-grantee(s) as required by the laws of the State of Louisiana.

Post Award Reporting Requirements

Quarterly Performance Reports must be completed by the subgrantee(s) and submitted to LDAF. These reports shall be in a narrative format from one to three pages and detail the accomplishments of the project objectives. Reports should include:

1. Project Title
2. Activities Performed
3. Problems and Delays

4. Future Project Plans
5. Funding Expended to Date

A **Final Performance Report** will be required within 60 days following the end date of the AMS grant agreement with LDAF. The final report should include the project's detailed progress to date.

1. Project Title
2. Project Summary
3. Project Approach
4. Goals and Outcomes Achieved
5. Beneficiaries
6. Lessoned Learned

Additional Information

Sample materials submitted will not be returned; however, they can be picked up at the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry, Hammond Complex Building, 47076 N. Morrison Blvd., Hammond, Louisiana on June 3, 2010 or June 4, 2010 during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

All requests for additional information and/or questions regarding this RFA should be directed to Michelle Estay at the physical address or the internet address on page 1, and must be submitted in writing.